

Transporting People, Tackling Pollution

Liberal Democrat Proposals for Improving Transport in Britain



Policy Paper 15

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Summary

The key aims of Liberal Democrat Transport Policy are to:

- Provide accessibility for all: the means to reach work, shops, friends and other facilities.
- Meet the aim of accessibility consistent with the principles of environmental sustainability.
- Maximise the potential of the railway for the carriage of freight and passengers.
- Develop integrated transport systems which support a sustainable and efficient economy.

In implementing these aims, our priorities are: to reduce the need for transport; to put public transport before private, rail before road, less polluting before more polluting forms of transport and to encourage walking and cycling.

The framework for putting our aims into effect will be a ten year strategy in which Government sets out its future environmental and investment priorities. Local authorities will be required to assess the effectiveness of their current environmental, accessibility and economic measures and to draw up plans to ensure that the targets laid down in these areas by central government are met.

Liberal Democrats intend to take effective action to tackle the growing problem of air pollution, both at the local and the global level. We propose the proper enforcement of emission control measures.

To promote efficient fuel use, whilst protecting the poorer rural motorist, Liberal Democrats would rebalance fuel tax and vehicle excise duty and the taxation of company financed motoring. The tax burden should be placed squarely on vehicle usage, not ownership. The planning process would be overhauled with the object of reducing the need for travel.

Regional and local government would be given extra powers and resources to help them meet their targets. Liberal Democrats propose to route a proportion of public funds used to support the local rail network through local authorities.

The enforcement of tough emission standards for vehicles would become the responsibility of local councils and they should be able to recycle the money raised from parking charges and penalty notices into public transport. In urban areas, local authorities would be able to introduce road pricing schemes, the revenues from which could be used to support local transport objectives.

The tax system would be used to encourage activities or projects that meet the overall aims of our transport strategy. Support should be given to transport activities, such as railway services, which are less damaging to the environment but where such benefits are not easily converted into prices or charges.

Liberal Democrats would establish an open and accountable transport planning process within which proposals affecting different modes of transport would be appraised using the same criteria.

Liberal Democrats oppose the dismantling of British Rail, particularly the proposed sale of Railtrack. We would reacquire a controlling interest in Railtrack, without profit to the new owners, if it is sold before the next general election.

Liberal Democrats propose to create a small number of regional railway companies, each with the responsibility for all aspects of service delivery within its region. Our new National Rail Authority would be responsible for the franchising of these services and of implementing our overall transport policies within the rail sector.

We support the use of private finance for renewal of assets, such as rolling stock and infrastructure, in return for which the financier will have the right to operate services and receive returns for a fixed period. Treasury Rules that limit the ability of trading companies in the public sector to seek investment capital in the markets should be relaxed.

Regulation has a vital role in ensuring the effective implementation of our policy objectives. We propose giving the Rail Regulator the specific duty of increasing the use of the rail system. The Users' Councils that advise the Regulator would be made more representative.

The Liberal Democrat Approach

1.0.1 All people should have the freedom to travel safely and affordably and have access to a wide range of goods and services. This freedom must be made compatible with substantially reducing the impact on the community of pollution, noise and accidents. We also value, just as strongly, the freedom not to have to travel unnecessary distances for the basic needs of life, such as education, employment, shopping and health services.

1.0.2 The means to achieve these aims rests on the basic Liberal Democrat principles of:

- Freedom and choice for the individual and social justice.
- Decentralisation of power.
- Sustainable economic development that recognises the threats to the global, national and local environment.
- Government that takes a long term view in creating conditions necessary for these principles to be put into practice.

1.0.3 Liberal Democrats seek to:

- *Provide effective accessibility for all.* This means ensuring that each individual has the means of reaching work, friends, shops and leisure and other facilities.
- *Meet our accessibility objectives in an environmentally sustainable way at the local, regional and global level.* This would require setting specific and appropriate environmental standards.
- *Promote transport systems which support the development of a sustainable and efficient economy.*

- *Establish an accountable transport planning process* which recognises that decisions may need to be taken at local, regional, national or European level and also acknowledges that decisions should be taken at the lowest level that is appropriate.
- *Provide a transport system that is safe* in respect of:
 - (a) Personal safety and the fear of crime.
 - (b) Accidents to pedestrians, cyclists, drivers and their passengers.
 - (c) Other health effects caused by transport systems.
- *Ensure that the social, environmental and financial costs of forcing people to travel longer distances to meet their needs are recognised.*
- *Use resources efficiently in achieving these objectives* and ensure that the transport planning process is aimed at securing the best possible overall use of resources.

1.0.4 The public sector has a vital role in planning, providing, regulating and integrating transport facilities.

All people should have the freedom to travel safely and affordably and have access to a wide range of goods and services.

Transport has major direct and indirect impacts on the environment and the economy, through the effects of air and noise pollution for

example. Market forces on their own are often unable to provide effective price signals.

Action by government within the market is, therefore, necessary.

1.0.5 A key function of transport planning must be to reduce traffic. Transport already accounts for a fifth of the UK's global warming emissions and is now the only sector in which the output of emissions is rising. Reducing traffic is a key means of tackling the threat of climate change.

Liberal Democrats value the freedom not to have to travel unnecessary distances for the basic needs of life.

The Conservative obsession with judging everything by narrow financial performance criteria and of treating each sector in isolation is leading to damaging decisions being taken. As we pointed out in *Planning for Sustainability* (English Green Paper 7, 1994), by creating the need for travel, through the closure of local schools for example, overall costs are not being reduced. The burden is merely being transferred.

1.0.6 A clear strategic framework for transport must be developed. This would give decision-takers in the public and private sectors the necessary confidence to invest and innovate. Instruments of transport policy set out in this paper include:

- *Direct provision of infrastructure and services.*

- *The planned purchase by local, regional or national government of services from the private sector (e.g. franchising).*

- *Land use and other planning controls.*

- *Taxes and charges that more accurately reflect the true cost of all forms of transport.*

- *Regulation to enforce high standards and best practice for goods and services.*

1.0.7 Transport policy making should be a practical example of democracy in action. Democratically accountable transport and land use planning authorities, at both local and regional level, would then be free to innovate, plan and raise finance for investment. However, the devolution of transport policy-making should reinforce the framework of national (and, where appropriate, European or inter-national) objectives.

1.0.8 The decentralisation of central government decision-making to a regional level will increase accountability and foster local consultation and participation in the adoption of the measures needed to meet the national transport objectives, standards and targets.

1.0.9 Air travel is growing rapidly. Access by air to and from the more remote areas of Britain is important in developing the economy and tourism. A paper on air transport and airports will be presented to a future party conference. In general, Liberal Democrats believe that airports should be licensed so that noise, pollution and the numbers of road vehicles are capped. This would put a premium on the use of quieter and more fuel efficient aircraft while encouraging the improvement of rail and bus access for travellers and airport workers.

The Role of Government

2.0.1 The co-ordination and development of road, rail and air transport cannot be left solely to market forces. A strategic overview is required which takes into account:

- The effects of transport on the location of people and activities.
- The impact on the environment.
- The influence on society, commerce and industry.

2.0.2 Within this framework market forces have a key role in applying resources in accordance with the demands of users and of securing efficiency. Market forces, however, require an effective regulatory framework to ensure that they serve the wider public. It is also necessary that prices reflect environmental and social costs.

Our priorities are to reduce the need for transport, to put public transport before private, rail before road and less polluting before more polluting forms of transport.

The untrammelled market has led to major redevelopments, such as London's Docklands, being insufficiently served by public transport and to the increasing use of green field sites for hypermarkets and factories at the cost of declining urban centres and derelict industrial sites.

2.0.3 It must be the responsibility of

Government to set the environmental and transport priorities which determine, for example, the levels of public investment and national taxation policies, where the balance is struck between road, rail and air transport, the role of the private car and where responsibility for implementing these policies should lie.

2.0.4 Liberal Democrats would:

- *Establish a rolling ten year strategy* that sets out the Government's environmental and investment priorities for the future.
- *Use the tax system* to encourage activities or projects that meet the overall aims of the strategy.
- *Provide specific grants* in cases where the environmental benefit of a service cannot easily be converted into prices or charges.

2.0.5 Railways are an obvious example of such a service. Railways have the potential of using significantly less fuel per passenger than other forms of transport and, therefore, from an environmental point of view, should be able to charge less.

2.0.6 Our strategy would give priority to: reducing the need for transport; public transport over private; rail over road, less polluting over more polluting forms of transport, and to encouraging walking and cycling. Liberal Democrats would favour action, including use of the taxation system, to ensure that clear price signals are given about the costs to society of individual decisions to use a particular means of transport.

2.0.7 Liberal Democrats would not impose VAT on public transport fares.

2.1 Local Government

2.1.1 Decisions on how best to implement the required policies and the means of delivering them should be devolved to the most local level that is appropriate. In many cases this means local government.

Liberal Democrats would target government grants at schemes that promote cycling and walking.

Private sector contractors and others should also be used for the delivery of services where they can provide those services more efficiently.

2.1.2 It is at the local level where most passenger travel and freight movements take place and where improvement or further degradation in the level of service is most likely to be felt. Therefore, Liberal Democrats believe that the resources and powers of local authorities, in the transport area, should be increased. Under our proposals local authorities would be:

- *Required to draw up plans reflecting the environmental and accessibility targets set by government.*
- *Responsible for all major roads, except for motorways and key trunk roads.*
- *The channel through which a proportion of funds are channelled into rail franchises, thus providing an effective influence on the services provided.*
- *Given the power, through legislation, to retain the proceeds from parking and other penalty notices such as those resulting from speed cameras and bus lane infringements. Additionally, local authorities would be empowered, through a system of self*

financing penalty payments, to enforce vehicle emission standards.

2.1.3 Liberal Democrats would target government grants at schemes that promote walking, cycling and public transport, are environmentally sustainable and accessible to all. To assist local authorities in planning and implementing schemes grant allocations would be made known over the following three years. Through the grant system local authorities would be encouraged to work together, especially in the period prior to the creation of regional authorities.

2.2 Ownership

2.2.1 Liberal Democrats would not have dismantled British Rail in the manner of the present Government. We believe it will lead to operational inefficiencies and confusion among rail users. However, we are not opposed to the privatisation of some services and support increased devolution and diversity and greater independence for management within the existing structure.

2.2.2 The strategic development of railway infrastructure should be a matter of national policy. Liberal Democrats, therefore, oppose the privatisation of Railtrack and would reacquire a controlling interest, without profit to the owners, if it is sold off before the next general election.

2.2.3 Liberal Democrats oppose plans to privatise the London Underground system on a line by line basis. This is inappropriate for an integrated network. Privatising the Underground as a whole and creating a private monopoly has no merit.

2.2.4 The road system should remain in public hands. Whilst we remain unconvinced about the practicality of tolls for trunk roads and motorways we believe that urban road pricing should become an option that local authorities may want to pursue alongside other measures to restrain traffic in city centres.

Liberal Democrats would:

- *Require all local authorities to consider various types of road pricing and parking management schemes* as part of an integrated transport policy for their areas.
- *Encourage experimentation by setting national technical standards* and providing central government grants to cover set up costs.

2.3 Investment

2.3.1 In the foreseeable future, Government will not have sufficient resources to provide the huge investment required to up-grade all forms of public transport. For major projects, such as the renewal of the West Coast Main Line, private capital will be sought. This can be done, for example, by combining infrastructure renewal with operation by granting a franchise and the right to receive returns for a fixed period.

2.3.2 Public sector financing should be focused on those key projects for which private sector financing is either not forthcoming or is not financially feasible. We would switch money from the road building programme to public transport initiatives.

Liberal Democrats remain unconvinced about the practicality of tolls for trunk roads and motorways.

Money raised locally from penalty notices and charges that affect private transport, such as vehicle emission controls, should be used to invest in public provision, and in some cases directly hypothecated to implementing local transport objectives.

2.3.3 We would relax the Treasury Rules that limit the ability of public sector trading companies to seek investment capital in the markets.

2.4 The Appraisal of Transport Projects

2.4.1 The appraisal system, by which proposed road and public transport schemes are evaluated, is currently weighted towards road building. The system must be completely revised in order to establish a common framework for transport investment regardless of mode. Under the Liberal Democrats' proposals, the evaluation would take into account environmental and social costs and must be based on the overall objectives of the Government's transport strategy (see paragraph 2.0.4). The use of a common system of evaluating and considering policy options should ensure that the most cost-effective package of measures is adopted.

2.4.2 It is vital that the decision making process is made more open. Accurate information must be made available to policy makers and the process of planning inquiries must become cheaper and more simple. This would make the process more democratic and assist effective decision-making.

2.5 Regulation

2.5.1 Liberal Democrats envisage regulation having a vital role in ensuring the effective implementation of policy objectives including environmental, safety and employment standards and achieving fair competition. Unregulated competition in the bus sector has led to the establishment of *de facto* monopolies in some areas and unstable competition on many urban routes. We do not regard competition as an end in itself but as one means of securing greater efficiency. Regulation should be equally concerned with the monitoring and enforcement of quality standards. Prompt and effective action must be taken to deal with anti-competitive behaviour, such as predatory pricing.

2.5.2 The users' councils which advise the Rail Regulator should be adequately resourced and be democratically constituted. Liberal Democrats propose to:

- *Oblige the Regulator to take account of the views of the councils in varying licences.*
- *Encourage regional and local authorities to consult users' councils in the drawing up of local transport plans.*
- *Develop means of bringing the bus industry, outside London, within the scope of the users' councils.*

2.5.3 To help achieve our overall transport objectives Liberal Democrats propose to:

- *Reduce speed limits, in accordance with the needs of local people, and ensure their proper enforcement.*

- *Introduce speed limiters on vehicles, beginning with Heavy Goods Vehicles.*
- *Install emission controls in existing vehicles.*
- *Strengthen the powers and operational numbers of the Vehicle Inspectorate to crack down on illegal bus, coach and lorry operators.*
- *Enable local authorities to tax parking space at out of town shopping centres to reflect the cost of the increased road traffic produced. This money will be reinvested by local authorities into public transport provision.*
- *Designate lorry routes and the enforcement of lorry bans.*

Transport and Air Pollution

3.0.1 There are two distinct aspects of the problem of transport-related air pollution. The first is in localised pollution which leads to concerns regarding health problems such as asthma. The second is in its contribution to the problem of global warming.

3.1 Localised Air Pollution

3.1.1 There is increasing evidence that many people in the UK become exposed to concentrations of pollution above World Health Organization guidelines as a result of emissions from road vehicles. This includes ground level ozone, which is a problem in both rural and urban areas, nitrogen dioxide at urban sites and PM10s, the fine particulate emissions from diesel engines.

Liberal Democrats wish to see emissions from the transport sector reduced by 50% from their current level.

There can be little doubt that present levels of pollution may be causing serious damage to human health by triggering or exacerbating respiratory problems and by exposing people to carcinogens.

3.2 Global Warming

3.2.1 The Government is committed to returning the UK's emissions of Greenhouse gases (of which the most important from the transport sector is carbon dioxide) to the 1990 level by the year 2000 but has no targets beyond this. Surface transport now accounts

for 21% of the UK's emissions, or 24% if electricity use and fuel production are included. On current projections, emissions from the transport sector will rise from 47 million tonnes in 1990 to 60 million tonnes in 2020. Quite clearly, any serious policy to address global warming will have to deal with that likely increase. Since the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has suggested that cuts in emissions in the order of 60% are required, this presents a major challenge to transport policy makers. The 18th report of the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution proposed that emissions from surface transport should be reduced to below 80% of the 1990 level by 2020 through road traffic reduction and improvements in the fuel efficiency of new cars.

3.3 The Liberal Democrat Response

3.3.1 The key policy objective must be to reduce harmful emissions within the framework of a sustainable transport policy that provides access to all. No single policy will achieve the necessary reduction in emissions. Each policy has to be seen as part of an overall programme. In order to measure the effectiveness of these policies, targets should be set for the reduction of emissions and for the individual elements of the programme. Liberal Democrats wish to see over the longer term emissions from the transport sector reduced by 50% from their current level. Only a figure of this order addresses the scale of the problem of global warming.

3.3.2 Our programme for reducing emissions falls under four headings:

- Emission control measures.
- Increases in fuel efficiency.

- Road traffic reduction.
- Changes in planning to reduce the need for transport.

3.4 Emission Control Measures

3.4.1 Initial advances in reducing emissions can be made by tightening up emission standards and improving monitoring. Liberal Democrats would:

- *Urge our partners in the European Union to at least match UK standards.*
- *Introduce a more rigorous and independently administered MOT test to focus strongly on emissions.*

This would be backed up by powers for local authorities to enforce standards for vehicle emissions through a system of penalty notices.

3.4.2 Liberal Democrats propose further action to reduce pollution from diesel engines, such as advancing the use of low-sulphur diesel fuel. We would encourage the retro-fitting of catalysts and particulate filters to older vehicles remaining in use. Air quality monitoring should be improved so that we have at least adequate knowledge of the current level of emissions and the effectiveness of any policies designed to deal with them.

3.5 Increases in Fuel Efficiency

3.5.1 The Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution proposed a target of a 40% increase in the average fuel efficiency of new cars sold in the UK between 1990 and 2005. It is widely recognised that this is an achievable target. So far, European manufacturers have offered only a 10% improvement. In the absence of market pressure for fuel efficiency, Government action, through the rebalancing of motoring taxation, will be required to stimulate the

improvements necessary. Liberal Democrats would lower Vehicle Excise Duty for smaller and more fuel efficient cars and motor cycles and the rise in fuel taxes pegged to a level which would protect the less affluent rural motorist.

3.6 Targets for Road Traffic Reduction

3.6.1 Liberal Democrats will establish a target of a 10% reduction in road traffic. This is likely to be the minimum necessary to tackle the scale of the air pollution problem. Our aim is to reduce the need to use cars rather than prevent people from owning cars.

3.6.2 Liberal Democrats also propose that within the national targets there should be separate targets for each region and for freight and private cars. Nevertheless, these targets should be set within a framework to deliver the aggregate national results. Improving public transport services and making them cheaper to use plays a key part in encouraging car owners to make less use of their cars.

3.6.3 The promotion of walking and cycling also requires expenditure to make these activities safer and more attractive. The majority of car journeys cover short distances and are disproportionately polluting while the engine and catalytic converter are warming up.

Liberal Democrats will establish a target of a 10% reduction in road traffic.

Major efforts are needed to encourage people to walk and cycle more. Such policies must be devised and implemented locally and should be actively encouraged by central government through its procedures for allocating resources to local authorities.

3.6.4 As part of this programme Liberal Democrats would require local authorities to draw up local transport plans and carry out an accessibility audit for their area. The information from the audits can be used to target resources at areas where improved public transport makes the greatest impact. We propose to ensure that rural areas receive a proper share of the money available.

3.6.5 The banding of VED proposed in paragraph 3.5.1 would encourage drivers with high mileages to use other forms of transport wherever possible and owners of larger cars to switch to more economical vehicles. Our proposals recognise that most private motorists, even those living in rural areas, travel less than 9,000 miles a year. As an illustration, the effect of an increase in petrol duty by 20 pence a gallon could, for most motorists, be more than offset by reducing VED, for vehicles of up to 1,500cc, from £135 to between £5 and £10.

***Liberal Democrats would
switch investment away from road
building into public transport
initiatives.***

Taxation relief on company cars and business motoring should only be available for cars with smaller engine capacities. In accordance with our wider objectives we would tax car usage rather than car ownership. By contrast, the Conservative Government has substantially increased taxation on both ownership and usage.

3.6.6 To stimulate the use of public transport as an alternative to car commuting, Liberal Democrats would redirect the tax relief associated with company financed motoring towards making public transport more attractive.

3.6.7 At the same time Liberal Democrats would switch investment away from the road building programme into public transport initiatives and enable local authorities to introduce urban road pricing. The revenue raised should be ploughed into improving public transport and into facilities for cyclists and pedestrians.

3.7. Reducing the Need for Transport

3.7.1 Reducing the need for travel is a vital part of any policy programme of traffic reduction. Liberal Democrats propose to tackle the problems created by current Conservative policies by:

- *Discouraging the siting of offices and factories and out-of-town hypermarkets on green field sites with no access by public transport.*
- *Giving local authorities the power to tax or charge these sites to meet the long term costs, including environmental and social costs, from the increase in road traffic brought about by new development. Proceeds will be earmarked to the strengthening of accessibility to existing centres.*
- *Drawing up new planning guidance to encourage zoning policies that maximise public transport access to all new developments and ensure that facilities are sited as close as possible to the users and consumers.*

Out of town sites for which planning permission has already been granted would immediately become liable to the new tax on parking spaces, proposed in paragraph 2.5.3.

3.7.2 We would give consideration to the means by which private non-residential parking might be subject, over time, to some form of local tax with the proceeds devoted to improving the quality or cost of local transport.

Towards A Working Railway

4.0.1 As part of our strategy to reduce pollution and congestion and to provide an attractive alternative to the private car, Liberal Democrats want to see a safe, busy and expanded railway that is both popular and cost effective. The railway system will play an essential part in the environmentally sustainable and economically successful society Liberal Democrats aim to create in the twenty-first century.

4.0.2 Our transport policies are determined as much by their social and environmental impact as by direct financial costs. A modern railway system is vital if we are to be successful in achieving sustainability and in reducing congestion and pollution.

Liberal Democrats would reacquire a controlling interest in Railtrack if it is sold off before the next General Election.

Liberal Democrats believe that railways should, and could, carry the steadily increasing proportion of passengers and freight suggested by the 18th Report of the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution.

4.1 Government and the Rail Infrastructure

4.1.1 Under our proposals each tier of administration would have separate and specific functions within transport policy:

- *National government:* setting high level targets (for performance and carryings for

example), and providing subsidy and investment funds.

- *The proposed National Rail Authority (see section 4.3):* securing service provision through comprehensive franchise agreements and investment from both public and private sources.
- *Local or regional government:* defining local objectives and requirements and adding funding towards securing these. To strengthen the influence of local government, a proportion of franchisees income and investment funds would pass through regional or local authorities.
- *The private sector or “arms length” public sector trading companies:* the provision of train and engineering services.

4.1.2 However, the basic railway infrastructure is a national asset. The strategic development of railway infrastructure should be a matter of national policy. Otherwise it will be impossible to develop a transport policy that is environmentally sustainable and which reflects the needs of individuals and communities across the country. The basic rail infrastructure should not pass out of public control. Therefore, Liberal Democrats oppose the privatisation of Railtrack. We would:

- *Reacquire a controlling interest* if it is sold off before the next general election without any profit passing to the new owners.
- *Protect railway rights of way* which have fallen out of use as transport corridors.
- *Safeguard potential development sites adjacent to the railway* so that new industries can locate themselves conveniently to rail services, or so such sites

may be available for new stations or expanded park and ride sites.

4.2 The Role of the Private Sector

4.2.1 The private sector has an important and positive part to play in Britain's railway system. The maintenance, renewal or expansion of the network (including the building of new lines) can be carried out by contractors. We would welcome expertise and finance in these and other areas. Furthermore, the private sector will have a key role in freight train-operating companies. However, long-term strategic decisions, such as whether major routes are upgraded, should be made in the light of far wider considerations, including the potential social and environmental benefits, rather than the narrow financial costs.

4.3 A National Railway Authority

4.3.1 Liberal Democrats propose to establish a new National Railway Authority. This would:

- *Assume the various responsibilities of Railtrack, the Franchise Director and British Rail, but not the Regulator (see paragraph 4.6 below).*
- *Own the basic infrastructure and ensure that investment, necessary for upgrading and extension, was raised either from public or private funds.*
- *Let franchises after close and genuine consultation with local communities and their representatives.*
- *Be responsible for the procurement of services and investment.*
- *Promote the development and expansion of "Inter City" as a national express network linking all major stations.*

4.3.2 The National Railway Authority would be a small strategic organisation with a board

and executive delegated the responsibility of achieving the transport, environmental and efficiency targets laid down by the Government. It would not operate trains or undertake engineering operations. The Board members would be chosen to reflect their commitment to these targets.

4.4 The Provision of Passenger Services

4.4.1 The Conservative Government decided to split responsibility for managing train services between track owners and a large number of franchised train operators. Nearly one hundred organisations are likely to be involved in the delivery of train services. Splitting British Rail into so many different parts, each relying on contractual arrangements with the rest, is bound to lead to operational inefficiencies and confusion among rail users. However, a return to the British Rail of the past is not a solution to these problems. It was a monolithic organisation and all too often unresponsive to the needs of its customers.

4.4.2 Most railway journeys in Britain take place within regional corridors. In these corridors connections, inter-available tickets and timetables, good information and co-ordination are more efficiently provided by one operator. Liberal Democrats believe that responsibility to the customer for service quality in such circumstances is best exercised by one operator.

4.4.3 Liberal Democrats, therefore, propose the creation of a small number of regional companies. This would:

- *Keep all aspects of service delivery in each region within the control of a single company, including timetabling, signal control, station management, and day to day track maintenance.*
- *Retain some diversity in the supply of services.*
- *Ensure clear accountability to users for quality standards.*

- *Create opportunities to compare the performance of different operators* thus facilitating the processes of franchising and regulation.
- *Protect the interests of customers within comprehensive franchise agreements.*
- *Safeguard access by freight and inter-regional passenger operators by effective regulation.* In particular the timetable will be an open document which any potential operator can consult. Anyone who is denied access could propose alterations to the Regulator.

4.5 The Franchising of Services

4.5.1 By the time of the next general election, it is likely that the operation of some routes will be in the hands of private sector franchisees. A significant number will still be run by public sector management teams. This will not mean that the Government's changes would, by then, be irreversible. Neither will it mean that the only way to reform rail services would be by wholesale nationalisation. Influence and control, not ownership, is the key.

4.5.2 Where necessary, Liberal Democrats would:

- *Seek to alter the scope and specification of franchises, by legislation if necessary, to achieve our wider objectives.*
- *Design franchises to secure a steady growth in the proportion of passenger and freight trips made by rail in line with nationally agreed targets.* This would encourage franchisees to invest in all aspects of the service.

The process may involve long franchises or automatic renewals of franchises, provided all the targets set had been achieved and subject to a share of the efficiency improvements being passed to the users.

4.5.3 Liberal Democrats would put public sector management teams on equal terms with the private sector franchisees in respect of freedom from interference in day to day management and access to capital.

4.5.4 We would ensure that franchises embrace train services and a wide range of station facilities including information, adequate and secure car and cycle storage, levels of staffing, lavatories and waiting facilities. Franchisees would be encouraged to provide adequate facilities for families and for the conveyance of cycles on trains and to improve personal safety on trains and stations and, thereby, encourage increased use of the rail system.

4.6 The Role of the Regulator

4.6.1 The Regulator has a key role to play in promoting the interests of consumers. However, it is not necessary for the Regulator to have a duty to promote competition because the railway faces significant competition in almost all the markets in which it operates.

4.6.2 Therefore, Liberal Democrats would:

- *Replace the duty of the Regulator to promote competition with a duty to create the conditions necessary to achieve specific target increases in the use of the system by both passengers and freight.*
- *Extend the powers of the Regulator to cover rolling stock leases until there is a fully competitive market in the supply of passenger rolling stock.*
- *Require the Regulator to take an active role in promoting inter operator ticketing and information systems.*
- *Reform the consultative committees which advise the Regulator.* He or she will be obliged to take account of their views in varying licences and to publish the reasons for not acting upon them.

4.7 Access to Services

4.7.1 Improvements in the quality of rail services will not fully achieve their goals if access to those services remains limited for some people. Liberal Democrats will improve access to railway services for passengers and freight over time by:

- *Reforming the land use planning process* to ensure that new developments are accessible by rail.
- *Close co-ordination with other forms of transport including cycling and walking* so that, for example, travellers are encouraged to use rail through the availability of safe, secure and cheap places to leave cycles and cars.
- *Investing in modern equipment that makes the railway accessible to all* and which, of itself, makes rail a more attractive transport option.
- *Introducing a virtuous circle of lower fares and charges* leading to an increased number of journeys made.

4.7.2 Proposals for improving access to services by disabled people are made in Policy Paper 13, *Access for All* (1995).

4.8 Freight Services

4.8.1 Liberal Democrats want to see much more long distance heavy freight using the railways. If the amount of such freight moving more than 200 kilometres using the railways was doubled, this could reduce long distance road haulage by over 20%.

4.8.2 The growing railfreight traffic through the Channel Tunnel demonstrates the potential for capturing long distance international traffic to rail. We would give high priority to

establishing “piggyback” links across the country which enable lorry trailers to be conveyed on railway wagons.

4.8.3 Liberal Democrats propose that private sector operators owning their own locomotives and wagons should have open access to the railway as they have very strong incentives to turn expensive equipment around to achieve the high levels of utilisation necessary to make rail transport competitive. We would:

- *Give such operators and their advisers access to the timetable*, so that they can plan journeys, and the right of appeal to the Regulator if access is denied to them.
- *Place any public sector operator on equal terms with the private sector.* (See paragraph 4.5.3).
- *Make available more generous grants to assist the setting up of rail terminals and sidings.*

4.8.4 Access charges to the railways and the roads would be calculated on the basis of social marginal cost which would reflect wear and tear, accident costs and pollution together with a licence fee for all vehicles on a similar basis to that which applies in Sweden. Under this system, the cost of access reflects the safety and environmental benefits of rail transport. A rebate of access charges will be considered as a means of encouraging flows of traffic to use the railways.

4.8.5 Liberal Democrats would rigorously enforce the law relating to road freight transport, particularly in respect of overloading, excessive driver hours and poor maintenance. Penalty charges, linked to a system of penalty points, would fund enforcement. This would lead to the loss of operator licences for serious or persistent offenders.

Buses

5.0.1 The number of passengers carried by buses has been in general decline for 40 years. However, in the years prior to deregulation in 1986 patronage increased in the metropolitan counties. The Government's deregulation has not reversed the general trend and has more than wiped out the gains made in the metropolitan counties. In London, where a system of route tendering is in place, passenger numbers have held up. In many places there has been a substantial loss of bus patronage, for example, Greater Manchester has lost one third of bus travellers. In a few places there has been growth in the use of buses, for example in Bristol there has been an increase of 26 percent.

5.0.2 Buses are an extremely important part of the transport industry, especially in attracting the shorter urban journeys from the car. For buses to realise their potential, substantial investment must be made in new buses which are easy to get on and off, with low levels of noise and pollution and which are designed to attract passengers. At the same time priority must be given to buses in the use of road space and facilities such as park and ride and good shelters and information

5.1 Local Bus Monopolies

5.1.1 The areas where the use of buses has increased since deregulation appear to be those where local monopolies have been established and where the local authorities have been active in giving priority to the bus on the roads. The local monopolists have often invested in new vehicles and extended hours of operation by cross subsidising. Elsewhere, where unstable competition is rife there are often many old vehicles, unpredictable timetables, poor information and an unwillingness of operators to provide services outside the core part of weekdays or away from main routes.

5.1.2 Liberal Democrats would raise entry standards to the industry by laying down a strict

timetable for introducing more modern accessible, less polluting vehicles. Operators failing to meet maintenance or operational standards would be debarred from involvement in the industry in any capacity for long periods through the issue of a new form of operator licence.

5.1.3 Liberal Democrats accept there are economies of scale in bus operation which tend towards the creation of local monopolies. With adequate regulatory protection for consumers, this may not necessarily be objectionable.

An industry regulator would oversee competition and quality standards in the bus industry.

Small operators meeting quality standards must be protected from predatory action by larger neighbours. Monopolies must face the possibility of competitive challenge if they are not to become complacent and otherwise abuse their dominant position. We do recognise, however, that every bus operator faces substantial competition from the private car.

5.2 A Bus Regulator

5.2.1 Local Authorities would have a responsibility for promoting bus use and coordinating services in their area. Liberal Democrats would establish an industry Regulator with the responsibility of overseeing competition and quality standards in the bus industry. The Regulator would have the power to:

- *Step in at once if predatory behaviour occurs.*

- *Fine offenders* and, as a last resort, withdraw an operators licence.
- *Impose price caps in monopoly situations* in the event of fare rises exceeding inflation.
- *Encourage cooperation between operators.*

5.2.2 The Regulator would use, as agent, the Traffic Commissioners who would respond to the Regulator on bus industry matters. The Regulator or Traffic Commissioner would be under a duty to respond to representation from local authorities, users or other aggrieved parties.

5.3 Dealing with Destructive Competition

5.3.1 To prevent totally destructive competition we would impose various disciplines on operators, including a requirement that registrations of new journeys should normally provide an even spread of departures along a route (to prevent bunching).

5.3.2 Where it is evident that there is an excess of competition, leading to large numbers of lightly loaded buses, congestion at bus stops and bunching of departures, Liberal Democrats propose to allow local authorities to apply to the Traffic Commissioner to take action. This might include the making of a “franchise order”. This would entitle a local authority to determine the level of service required and to let the right to provide that service through a tendering mechanism.

Liberal Democrats would assist the bus industry to invest in new vehicles and to reduce fares.

Any tendering mechanism should, however, seek to leave some flexibility for operators to enhance

and amend services rather than be absolutely prescriptive.

5.4 Towards a Better Service

5.4.1 Passengers generally value through ticketing between bus companies, joint timetables and other forms of co-operation, including with other modes of transport. Liberal Democrats would review the application of competition law where it inhibits such cooperation.

5.4.2 To assist the bus industry to invest in new vehicles and to help reduce fares, Liberal Democrats would:

- *Restore in full the Fuel Duty Rebate* which the Tories have eroded in the last two budgets.
- *Make available grants to cover part of the additional cost of new low floor buses* meeting the highest available emission standards. This would encourage investment in the highest standards of vehicles.

5.4.3 Liberal Democrats propose to:

- *Give a higher priority to local authority package bids for funds for bus priority* in the allocation of central government funds. Applicant authorities would have to show that progressive measures were in hand to reduce car use in city centres in order to qualify.
- *Allow local authorities to spend money raised from parking enforcement on all kinds of public transport improvements.*
- *Empower local authorities to issue penalty notices for infringement of bus lanes* detected either through cameras or civilian agents.
- *Enable local authorities to levy a new rate on car parks at out of town shopping centres* with the money raised ear-marked, in the same way as town parking receipts, for the support of public transport. (See section 3.7).

Rural Transport

6.0.1 The aim of Liberal Democrat transport policy for rural areas is to ensure reasonable access to facilities and amenities for all whilst minimising environmental damage.

6.0.2 Car use is growing faster in rural areas than anywhere else, not least because it is often the only means of transport available. People without access to a car are, therefore, isolated by the lack of public transport and the loss of local shops, post offices and other facilities.

6.1 Planning

6.1.1 Liberal Democrats strongly support measures that reduce the need for travel. In part this can be done by supporting the provision of services and facilities within communities.

Liberal Democrats would encourage the provision of safe, segregated routes to school for pedestrians and cyclists.

Local authorities could play a key part in this if their powers to grant rate relief to essential local shops and post offices were expanded. Already they can assist by ensuring that local plans encourage appropriate business developments so as to provide job opportunities within villages and small towns; and by taking into account the transport consequences of decisions on the provision of such services as education, social services and libraries.

6.1.2 In villages and smaller towns where journeys are short, Liberal Democrats would encourage local councils to develop safe routes

so that people would walk and cycle instead of using the car for short journeys. In some cases whole-village traffic calming may be appropriate.

6.1.3 More attention needs to be paid to the increasing numbers of children below the age of 11 now travelling to school by car. This has risen from around 20% twenty years ago to 80% today. Liberal Democrats welcome and will encourage experiments to reverse this trend through the provision of safe, segregated routes to school for bikes and pedestrians where these can be achieved without risk of accident or crime.

6.1.4 Liberal Democrats will encourage local authorities to establish targets for the reduction of home-to-work mileages as part of their local Agenda 21 sustainability plans.

6.1.5 Liberal Democrats would establish designated lorry routes (motorways, dual carriageways and some A class roads). Outside this network we propose to give local authorities the power to set limits on the size of HGVs that travel on secondary roads in their area and enforce the law through the use of cameras or civilian agents. This would reduce the number of oversized and unsuitable vehicles travelling on these roads.

6.2 Information Technology

6.2.1 Liberal Democrats recognise the significant part information technology can play in achieving our objectives. Teleworking, shopping by screen, entertainment, information and inter-active education facilities can all be provided in people's homes or through local "telecottages" so that people in rural areas can have access to key services without the use of transport.

6.2.2 It is regrettable that almost no investment is being made in the IT infrastructure in rural areas. Liberal Democrats would seek to correct this by amending the competition rules for the telephone and cable operators in order to encourage them to extend high capacity networks to rural communities. We believe that Government and European Union rural development and assistance policies should also focus on this objective.

6.3 Cars

6.3.1 For many journeys in rural areas the car is likely to remain the most used means of transport for the foreseeable future. With the exception of specific kinds of trips, such as journeys to work, school and for shopping, demand is unlikely to justify much improved conventional bus services on either economic or environmental grounds.

6.3.2 There are some four million cars more than ten years old on UK roads and older cars are usually more polluting. By encouraging people to switch to more economical cars, more progress is going to be made in meeting our environmental objectives in rural areas. The switch to more economical vehicles will both minimise the impact of essential environmental taxes on fuel and cut environmental damage.

6.3.3 Liberal Democrats propose a three pronged approach:

- *Banding VED, with fuel efficient cars being taxed at a lower rate.* (See paragraph 3.6.5).
- *Introducing tough and independently administered MOT tests.*
- *Giving local authorities powers to enforce emission standards through penalty notices.*

6.3.4 Much improved facilities for car owners when they reach a town or a public transport interchange will encourage them to transfer to public transport, either for journeys within a

town or for long distance travel. This requires secure and cheap park and ride facilities at edge of town sites and at rail stations.

6.4 Public Transport

6.4.1 With around a quarter of all households in many rural areas being without a car, isolation is a major problem. In many counties one partner in up to half the households does not have access to a car in the daytime or has no driving licence. We believe that the expansion of the various forms of community-based transport schemes offers the best way of meeting the needs of people without a car. Liberal Democrats will ensure that insurance and taxation rules do not inhibit such schemes. We also believe that local government can play a part, for example, by providing computerised car-sharing registers and organisational support for community schemes.

6.4.2 The difficulties of providing public transport in rural areas makes the integration of those services which are provided particularly crucial. Liberal Democrats would give local authorities the powers to make the best use of all kinds of publicly run passenger transport services, from commercial bus operators to school buses and transport organised by social services, and by integrating the services as far as possible. We would remove the legal obstacles to the use of local authority vehicles by fare-paying passengers. Such distinctions between services are not made in Northern Ireland and, as a consequence, a much better overall service is available.

6.4.3 Where rail lines still exist, the potential for attracting passengers from road to rail by reopening closed stations or by providing new facilities would be encouraged. This is particularly important in the more remote areas, where bus travel can be extremely slow. Furthermore, cycling should be encouraged by having large and secure cycle storage at railway stations.

Urban Transport

7.0.1 Each urban area is unique, with its own particular mix of population, employment and social facilities, and its own peculiar geography. Transport policy measures need to be developed and implemented locally, with flexibility and sensitivity and with the support of the cities, towns and neighbourhoods they cover.

7.0.2 However, local measures need to be consistent with the key objectives, outlined in chapter one. These objectives would be established by central government and integrated plans, agreed between central and local government, would ensure that they are met in all towns and cities.

7.0.3 Government should be responsible for drawing up the framework within which local authorities operate. This would integrate the specific measures employed by each local authority into a coherent national strategy. Liberal Democrats propose:

- *The establishment of strategic policy objectives by central government.*
- *The development of standards that can measure the achievement of these objectives.*
- *An agreement between central government and local authorities for targets and standards in each area.*
- *To enable local authorities to adopt the most suitable and acceptable measures needed to meet their targets and standards.*

7.0.4 The development of effective urban transport policies will require a package of measures involving the co-ordination of:

- Infrastructure provision

- Land-use planning including generators of travel and levels of accessibility
- Transport services
- Regulation of transport activities
- Fiscal measures that affect the cost of travel and affect key aspects that influence accessibility.

7.1 Meeting Our Transport Aims

7.1.1 Accessibility rather than mobility is our key concern. Liberal Democrats propose that areas within towns and cities should be categorised according to their accessibility. The classification would be determined according to several key criteria, such as car access dependence, quality of public transport services, pedestrian and cycle access and facilities for the mobility impaired.

To be effective planning measures need to be strengthened and coordinated with other forms of policy intervention.

The accessibility classifications would be set nationally and, as with systems developed in Holland, an area's accessibility rating would be linked to planning permission and other policy instruments. We believe this will encourage transport intensive activities towards areas that are the least car dependent and would provide a strong economic incentive for businesses, residents and local authorities to improve their accessibility ratings.

7.1.2 We propose that all local authorities establish targets for bringing the areas for which they are responsible up to a minimum accessibility standard.

7.1.3 Liberal Democrats would:

- *Establish specific environmental and health standards* for controlling key emissions from the transport sector.
- *Develop similar standards for noise*, specifying the maximum level of noise from transport sources to which people should be subjected on the street, in their homes and at their workplaces.
- *Require local transport plans to include an estimate of the current amount of emissions and noise in the urban area* with targets for their reduction showing how, together with policies applied at the national and regional level, their local transport plans would meet such targets.

Variations in local transport and planning measures must not set out to undermine nearby local authorities' transport strategies, such as competitive car parking policies.

7.2 The Safety of Urban Travel

7.2.1 At present there are Government targets for the overall accident rate, but this hides a poor record for pedestrian, child and cycle casualties. Cycle casualty rates are currently ten times those in Sweden and the Netherlands and our child casualty rates are poor by international standards.

7.2.2 Concern about personal safety is an increasingly important factor in determining transport decisions and often results in a car being used when, otherwise, public transport or walking would be the natural choice.

7.2.3 Therefore, Liberal Democrats propose that local transport plans aim for reductions in all types of transport casualties and in personal safety, as well as taking into account the effects

of policies upon the general health of the community.

Local transport plans should aim for reductions in all types of transport casualties.

7.2.4 The significance of the wider health effects of transport has only recently been recognised. These are more difficult to address via specific targets, but, at the very least, potential health effects should be addressed in the development of transport plans.

7.3 Towards an Integrated Approach

7.3.1 Serious barriers to effective transport policy development need to be removed. Breaking down the artificial barriers between different policy areas is at the heart of our approach to transport policy and we outline the importance of a strategic overview by Government in Chapter 2. To be effective, planning measures need to be strengthened and coordinated with other forms of policy intervention to provide a consistent policy. Liberal Democrats would:

- *Enable local authorities to introduce urban road pricing systems.*
- *Empower local authorities to enforce parking standards, vehicle emission standards, invasion of bus lanes and non-observance of lorry bans.* Local authorities will retain the income from fines and penalties for investment in public transport provision.
- *Route a proportion of franchise payments for rail services through local authorities* to give them effective influence over the standards and development of local rail services.

- *Amend the regulation and tendering of bus operations* to ensure that buses are able to provide a high quality public transport service. (See Chapter 5).

7.3.2 As stated in paragraph 2.2.4, the appraisal system for proposed transport developments must be completely revised in order to reflect our overall objectives. Liberal Democrats would give increasing priority to ‘package’ bids for Government grants which

include a range of complementary proposals rather than a single road building scheme. Other Government grants, such as City Challenge money, would take into account accessibility and other transport related issues with a view to rewarding developments that enhance accessibility and reduce car dependence. However, the process of revising the appraisal system should not be a barrier to immediate progress.

The Role of London

8.0.1 Liberal Democrats recognise that London is at present the hub of much of Britain's transport system. This means that transport policy for London is not just of concern to Londoners but also to those in the South East and across the United Kingdom.

8.0.2 Issues of only London-wide or Borough concern have not been developed in this paper as we would expect decisions on such matters to be made by the Boroughs or the London-wide regional authority we aim to establish, and not by Central Government.

8.1 Our Aims for London

8.1.1 We have five aims for London's transport:

- *Improving London's transport services* by maximising the co-ordination and integration of existing services.
- *Improving accessibility to transport services* for those living, working in, visiting or travelling through London.
- *Ensuring that there are safe, affordable and efficient links within and between all London's communities* and transport terminals.
- *Protecting the environment of London* and avoiding solutions which impose new environmental burdens on other parts of the South East
- *Contributing to a dynamic, efficient and sustainable economy.*

8.2 The Structure Required

8.2.1 The most effective means of implementing a transport policy for London is

through a strategic authority for London, to which we are committed in English Green Paper 5, *Shaping Tomorrow's Local Democracy*, (1991). Its functions would include:

- *Coordinating the transport needs of London.*
- *Encouraging and supporting the integration of services across the region*, upon which many outside London depend.
- *Coordinating planning and land-use across London.*
- *Providing Londoners with an effective voice on transport and land-use planning.*

8.3 The Policy Framework

8.3.1 Liberal Democrats oppose the privatisation of London Underground and the deregulation of bus services in London. As with bus services elsewhere we would strengthen the enforcement of quality standards in the industry with a view to raising standards of vehicles and of reducing emissions.

Liberal Democrats oppose the privatisation of London Underground and the deregulation of bus services in London.

8.3.2 Liberal Democrats support measures that tighten the restrictions on the use of the private car in London and oppose expenditure on building new through roads as this only generates more traffic. Investment should be diverted into improving public transport. We oppose the Government's proposed relaxation of controls on

the operation of mini-cabs which will undermine the effective operation of the current taxi service.

8.3.3 London's size and the large amount of traffic within it creates severe environmental problems. Liberal Democrats would:

- *Improve the monitoring of the levels of polluting gases.*
- *Ensure local authorities and the Police have the powers and resources to enforce pollution controls and traffic restrictions. As many penalties as possible would be converted into charges to fund enforcement and improved public transport.*
- *Ensure that more action is taken to reduce noise pollution.*

Our policy proposals on pollution control are set out in Chapter 3.

8.4 London's Railways

8.4.1 With declining service quality on what was Network South East it is clear that investment in London's railways need to be a higher priority than at present. This will not come about as a result of the Conservative Government's privatisation proposals. The Liberal Democrats are committed to reacquiring a controlling interest in Railtrack if it is sold off before the next General Election. Our proposals for the management of the rail industry (as outlined in Chapter 4) will ensure that:

- *The railway continues to be available to passengers as a complete network.*
- *London receives the investment required to raise standards across the network.*
- *Franchises specify improved frequency, reliability, comfort and cleanliness of trains and also station facilities, staffing, information, secure car parking and cycle storage, lavatories and waiting facilities.*

8.4.2 The interests of passengers will be best served by marketing the services of the Underground and British Rail as a total service.

A requirement to co-operate in this process would become a condition of railway franchises. We, therefore, support the retention of Travelcards and Senior Citizens' passes for all rail, tube and bus services. All planning and development should enhance the opportunities for better interchange.

8.4.3 There must be open and accountable procedures for deciding which of the many possible rail or underground projects are to be given priority, particularly given the large sums of public money involved. Comparisons should be made with alternative means of solving a particular traffic problem, such as tramways or guided bus routes.

The interests of passengers will be best served by marketing the services of the Underground and British Rail as a total service.

8.4.4 Liberal Democrats welcome the building of the Jubilee Line extension and acknowledge the considerable benefits it will bring to areas currently poorly served by public transport. It is clear from the experience of Docklands that major regeneration schemes require good transport links to be established before companies and their staff move in.

8.4.5 A series of major rail infrastructure projects have been proposed that are seen as key to providing London with the rail system it needs for the 21st Century. These include: Cross Rail, the Chelsea - Hackney Line and Thameslink 2000. All these projects must be subject to the open appraisal system we propose in Chapter 2 with regard, not just to their effect on transport in London, but also for longer distance travellers. The relative costs and merits of each proposal should be carefully considered to give priority to the schemes which yield the greatest benefit.

8.4.6 These prestige projects should not prevent or impede the proper consideration of smaller scale, and, therefore, less costly, options. A range of proposals, such as extending the East London Line, have been put forward by, amongst others, the London Rail Alliance in their paper *Rail Value for Money*.

8.4.7 In the short term, Liberal Democrats would give investment priority to bringing the existing network up to date. In particular, we would support improving signalling on the Underground in order to increase the capacity and frequency of services.

8.4.8 More consideration should be given to determining how:

- Other opportunities for rail journeys to cross London without changing trains can be developed.
- Britain's largest traffic generator, Heathrow Airport, can be better served by public transport.

Proposals that meet these needs would make rail a true alternative to the increasing use of the M25.

This Paper has been approved for debate by the Federal Conference by the Federal Policy Committee under the terms of Article 5.4 of the Federal Constitution. Within the policy-making procedure of the Liberal Democrats, the Federal Party determines the policy of the Party in those areas which might reasonably be expected to fall within the remit of the federal institutions in the context of a federal United Kingdom. The Party in England, the Scottish Liberal Democrats and the Welsh Liberal Democrats determine the policy of the Party on all other issues, except that any or all of them may confer this power upon the Federal Party in any specified area or areas. If approved by Conference, this paper will form the policy of the Party in England and Welsh Liberal Democrats.

Many of the policy papers published by the Liberal Democrats imply modifications to existing government public expenditure priorities. We recognise that it may not be possible to achieve all these proposals in the lifetime of one Parliament. We intend to publish a costings programme, setting out our priorities across all policy areas, closer to the next general election.

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